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**Listing of the Claims:**

The following is a marked-up version of the Claims pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.121 (c)(1)(ii) with instructions and markings showing changes made herein to the previous version of the Claims on record. Underlining denotes added text while strikeout denotes deleted text.

1. (Currently Amended) An isolated *Bacillus subtilis* ~~gram-positive microorganism~~ having a mutation or deletion of part or all of the nucleic acid encoding metalloprotease (MP), having the amino acid sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:2, and further wherein said mutation or deletion resulting results in the inactivation of the MP proteolytic activity.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Currently Amended) The microorganism of Claim 3 wherein ~~the *Bacillus* is *Bacillus subtilis* and the~~ said MP has the amino acid sequence as shown in Figure 1A-1O.

5. (Currently Amended) The microorganism of Claim 3 wherein ~~the *Bacillus* is *Bacillus subtilis* and the~~ said MP has the amino acid sequence encoding by the MP nucleic acid found that starts at about 2248 kb from the point of origin.

6. (Currently Amended) The microorganism of Claims 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 wherein said microorganism further comprises a nucleic acid sequence, wherein said nucleic acid sequence encodes encoding a heterologous protein.

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7. The microorganism of Claims 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 wherein said microorganism further comprises a nucleic acid sequence, wherein said nucleic acid sequence encodes encoding a homologous protein.

8. The microorganism of Claim 6 wherein said heterologous protein is selected from the group consisting of hormone, enzyme, growth factor and cytokine.

9. The microorganism of Claim 8 wherein said heterologous protein is an enzyme.

10. (Amended) The microorganism of Claim 9 wherein said enzyme is selected from the group consisting of a proteases, carbohydrases, and lipases; isomerases, ~~such as~~ racemases, epimerases, tautomerases, or mutases; transferases, kinases, and phosphatases.

Claims 11-25. (Cancelled).